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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, June 30, 1941

Subject: "TIPS ON SAVING VITAMINS." Information from nutrition scientists at various State Experiment Stations.

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Two hundred million dollars is a lot of money. Two hundred million dollars is the amount Dr. Felson of the U. S. Food and Drug Administration estimates people in this country spend every year just for vitamin preparations. That is an average of 2 dollars a year apiece for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Of course, part of this 2 million dollars goes for vitamin pills and other preparations people buy to dose themselves. But many millions go for vitamin preparations prescribed by doctors. Physicians more and more are discovering how many of their patients are low in vitamins. The irony of it is that so many people spend money to buy the very vitamins that go to waste every day in their kitchens. Nobody has estimated how many dollars' worth of vitamins go to waste in American kitchens--or how much good health is lost there--but nutrition scientists all agree the loss is tremendous. People could save so much money and be in so much better health if they chose their foods wisely, and if they would save the natural vitamins in foods. Just remember--it's money in your pocket and health in your family to think of vitamins when you buy foods at the market, and when you prepare them at home. Get enough vitamins off your dinner plate, and you won't have to buy synthetic vitamins at the drug store.

So now here are tips on saving vitamins from nutrition scientists at a number of State experiment stations.

Secret No. One is: Have your fruits and vegetables as fresh as possible.

The fresher they are, the more of the natural vitamins A and C they contain. People with gardens are lucky. They can go out and pick vitamin-rich garden foods just

before time to get dinner. To get full value in vitamins, gather vegetables the last minute before cooking and serving. And gather only enough for one meal.

Now if you buy your vegetables, be smart and get your money's worth in vitamins by marketing early in the morning while vegetables are fresh. Limp, flabby, wilted vegetables that have lain around in the heat of the market all day have lost vitamins and flavor and appetizing texture as well.

The same thing happens to vegetables at home, of course. Vegetables lie around the hot kitchen in baskets or vegetable bins and lose much of the vitamins they originally had. The place for vegetables to wait--if they must wait--is in the refrigerator where they can stay crisp and fresh.

Here's a tip on buying green peas and fresh lima beans. Buy them in the shell, and shell them at home. It may take more ~~time~~ than buying them ready-shelled at the market, but it saves the vitamin C. New York State scientists have found that peas and beans out of their shells lose vitamin C rapidly. Here's another buying tip to help you get vitamin-value. If you have a choice between a white variety of vegetable and a yellow or green variety, choose the yellow or green to get the most vitamin A. Dr. Fellers of the Massachusetts Station adds a point here. He says: "There is ample testimony that bleached asparagus, celery and endive contain far less carotene (or vitamin A) than the green or unbleached."

Now here are a few secrets of cooking to save vitamins. One important secret is: Never use soda in the cooking water. It may keep vegetables green, but it destroys vitamin C. You can keep vegetables green without soda by cooking in the shortest possible time in boiling water, leaving the lid off the kettle. Short cooking helps save vitamins, too.

A small amount of cooking water is another important secret of saving

vitamins. Vitamin C is soluble in water. Very often more of the vitamin C goes into the cooking water than is left in the vegetable. Recent studies at the Texas Station showed that more of the vitamin C in turnip greens went into the cooking water than was in the greens when they came to the table. That's why nutrition advisors are always urging housewives to serve the cooking liquid with the vegetable, or to use it in soup, or gravy. The water new green peas cook in, or cabbage, or lima beans, for example, is too valuable to be thrown away. Save it, but use it as soon as possible. The fresher it is, the more value it has.

But you can get around the problem of cooking water in a couple of ways. One is to cook tender vegetables in milk instead of water, and then serve the milk with the vegetables. You can add a little flour to thicken the milk just before you serve, and then you'll have creamed vegetables with no vitamins drained off. Or you can cook tender vegetables as the Chinese do--put a little fat in the pan and then put the vegetables in with no water. Just cook for a few minutes and serve "as is." A Chinese nutrition scientist working at the Oregon Station recently showed that this old Chinese way of cooking vegetables was one of the best methods for saving vitamins.

Here's one last tip on saving vitamins: Cook only enough vegetables for one meal. Don't cook a big batch, and then reheat them meal after meal. New York State scientists report that cooked vegetables, even when kept in the refrigerator, lose vitamin C very rapidly.

That's all the tips for vitamin saving today. More another day.

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